

Highland Spider Group - Orb weavers of the Highlands

Garden spider/Garden cross spider (*Araneus diadematus*)

A ubiquitous species, found in a wide variety of habitats, often sitting in the centre of its orb web. Distinctive “cross” near to the top of abdomen, but note that the strength of markings can vary. A wide variety of colours exist depending on habitat.

When to look: Mature late summer and autumn

Photograph: ©Hayley Wiswell

Cross



Four spot-orb weaver (*Araneus quadrata*)

The heavy weight of British spiders, found on vegetation which has sufficient height and strength to support the large orb web: rank grassland, heather and gorse, including damp habitat. The web is usually found stretched across the gap between plants, with a large tent-like retreat at one side, where the spider can be found if not in the centre of the web. Abdomen very distinctive, spherical in mature females and always with four large white spots. Ground colour of abdomen variable.

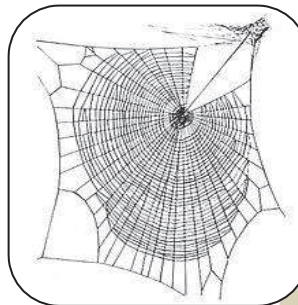
When to look: mature late summer and autumn

Photograph: ©Hayley Wiswell



Missing sector orb-weaver (*Zygiella x-notata*)

Conceals itself within a silk-tube retreat above an orb web with its distinctive “missing sector”. Distinctive silvery banding on sides of abdomen. Typically found on buildings and street furniture (including cash machines!). Often in the outside corners of windows. Specimens have also been discovered on cliffs and on bushes, especially near habitation. Single egg-sacs, covered loosely with yellow silk, are produced in autumn and winter and are affixed to solid surfaces.



Similar species: *Zygiella atrica* constructs a similar web but is found away from human habitation and has a pink flush to the abdomen which is absent in *Z. x-notata*.

When to look: late summer and autumn best but can be found all year round.

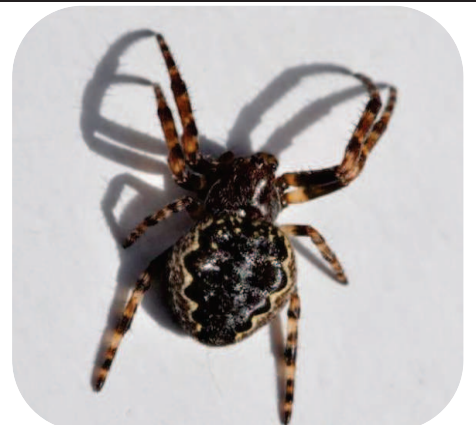
Photograph: ©Ian Pembroke

Walnut orb-weaver (*Nuctenea umbratica*)

This nocturnal spider conceals itself under bark and in fissures in posts and fences during the daytime, the body is flattened to assist this. The conspicuous orb web is usually empty during the day but the spider can be found hidden away nearby. Colour less variable than other species, usually very dark and always with a central dark area on abdomen with “dimples” on the surface.

When to look: Adults of both sexes are found mainly between late spring and autumn.

Photograph: ©Roger Harris ([Source](#))

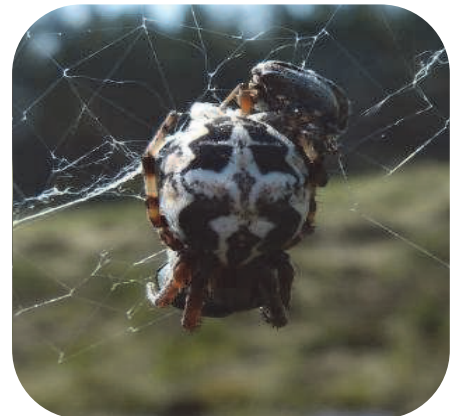


Furrow orb-weaver (*Larinioides cornutus*)

The spider can be found on reeds, grasses, and other waterside vegetation and in tall herbage and rough grassland, usually in damp places. Females can often be found spun up in a tough silk retreat in the seed heads of plants but they are also found on bridges and posts etc., where their orb webs are very prominent.

When to look: Adults are found mainly in early summer and late summer/autumn.

Photograph: ©Hayley Wiswell



Cyclosa conica (no common name)

A very distinctive spider, having a strange protruding abdomen (the male has a smaller protrusion than the female) and characteristic web with an extra line of silk across it (the stabilimentum). The spider sits in the centre of the web with legs folded, resembling discarded food, often incorporating prey and debris into the web. Found on bushes and trees, often evergreen, in damp or shady situations, preferring dark damp woodland, including plantation. Colour variable.



When to look: Adults of both sexes are found mainly in early summer.

Photographs: © Evan Jones 2012

Strawberry spider (*Araneus alsine*)

Localised records in Scotland but likely to be under recorded. Usually found on grasses and other low vegetation in damp, sheltered woodland clearings (often birch), or in stands of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*. The spider spins its web in this low herbage, and occupies a small conical retreat, consisting of silk and one or two curled, dry leaves, at the top of the web. Even though the spider is of a conspicuous orange to deep red colour it is often overlooked in its habitat.

When to look: Females are adult from June to October

Photograph: © Evan Jones 2013



How to make a record:

- What you saw
- Where you saw it (a 6 figure grid reference or a good description of the location)
- The habitat (woodland, grassland, house etc)
- When you saw it (day, month, year)
- Who saw it – the name of the person making the record
- Send your records to Hayley Wiswell wizwell.bugs@gmail.com so they can go on the Spider Recording Scheme (I'll also pass them onto HBRG)

Not sure what you've seen? Send a photo to the above email address or post on the Highland Spider Group's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/highlandspidergroup>)

Photos shown are of adult females as these are the most conspicuous and generally the easiest to find. Males are smaller in size and when mature have swollen "pedipalps" (which look like boxing gloves). Male abdominal patterns are usually similar to that of the female.